

but in the civilization of the American people. There are times and occasions where religious sentiment may be aroused for good, but they should be carefully contrasted with the merely mechanical effort of stirring up religious emotion, resulting in a forced, unnatural and valueless arousing of such sentiments as must necessarily be ephemeral because they are unnatural.

There is an important place for evangelization of the sensible sort, and we would only guard against the thought that comes as a hindrance to many souls—that only under the stress of such occasions, only under the influence of the emotions so aroused can there be any true earnest Christian life.

Nature gives us an illustration of the difference. Like springtime in the temperate zones, a genuine revival comes after a winter of cold, dead life; but where the life moves on steadily and strongly, doing its duty the year round, like vegetation in the tropics, no such revival is necessary or natural, but always the bloom and fruitage of Christian service and devotion is present and apparent.

In no case did Jesus require of anybody who was trying to find the way of life that he should develop a full set of Christian emotions and feelings—not once. Every time it is some objective thing they are to do, some service to render, some neglected command to obey. That was the recipe for eternal life, that was true religion, according to the author of religion, to go and do the duty next to you; for our Lord, who knew the hearts of men through and through and understood psychology better than any metaphysician since His time, knew that the sentiments ought to follow and not to lead the will, and that the truest feeling is not that which appears upon the surface in temporary excitement, but that which lies deep in the heart, to back up a purpose which is reasonably formed. Sentiment might enable Peter to swear undying fealty one hour, yet it did not keep him from cowardly denial an hour later. But a purpose formed after experience and trial did enable that same Peter to stand up heroically and face the world for the Master's sake.

The fact is, religion has been weakened in these later times because it has been made a matter of sentiment and not of obedience to God and his moral law; because it has not rested upon the unquestioned character and authority of Christ, but upon the emotions aroused by things collateral and incidental to these. The strength of the old Reformers, the Puritans and the Pilgrims and their spiritual posterity was not in feeling, but in loyalty to duty and obedience to the divine law. Latterly we have reacted from their stern position—which was, perhaps, much too stern and unemotional—but we have reacted too far and we must go back; and I believe we are going back to the recognition of the fact that the embracing of religion is not an experience of joy or ecstasy so much as a change of will and purpose and life, resting upon rational grounds, and that he who fears God and tries to do His will is accepted of Him, no matter how he feels about it.

A good Christian is made just as a good scholar is made—by daily performance of the task set before him, as a matter of habit and routine. You seldom see our boys and girls swinging their hats and cheering in enthusiasm over algebra and history and grammar. It sometimes happens that the scholar will so learn to enjoy his study by and by that he becomes an enthusiast in it, but the plodding and the digging and the patient continuance in well-doing usually precede such feelings of enthusiasm.

Men and women do not wait to be stirred by intense emotions before they undertake the ordinary duties and obligations of life. For the most part they do their work without much manifest feeling. The world's best work, the most of its heroic work, is done by habit, almost automatically. Men and women train themselves for service until that service becomes a matter of course. Just so one enters upon his life of noblest service and self-denial, not upon the high tides of emotion, but because it is right to follow the Master, to make all the life count in the blessing and the helping of other men.

The firemen in a great city do deeds of heroism almost daily that makes you thrill with admiration; but their work is done with nerves as steady as if made of machinery. A fireman will risk his own life in the most gallant manner possible, without giving a moment to the thought of his gallantry in saving another. It has come to be the regular order for him. Is he then an unworthy life-saver because he has no special feeling? The locomotive engineer sacrifices himself to save the trainload of passengers behind him simply because it is his duty as he conceives it, and he has not time to feel the significance of it.

The physician who comes to your bedside at night is not consulting his feelings. The trained and skillful nurse who watches the patient's every change does not take much note of her own feelings, though she has them. The people who rose early to bring you your meat and milk, and other necessities of your life, upon the day not long ago when the thermometer dropped below zero, did not consult their feelings; if they did you would have suffered. These all performed their duty that had come to be a habit with them, and the world's business goes on in that way, with a practical, steady performance of duty in spite of the feelings.

The mariner of old relied upon his feelings and instincts to guide his vessel, and he dared not go far into the deep when the stars had hid their light. The mariner of our time guides his craft by the infallible compass, which storm and darkness cannot swerve from its eternal magnet, and he launches boldly into the limitless deep.

I believe in enthusiasm, but I am learning to discount enthusiasm that is not the result of well considered and deliberately chosen principles of conduct. I am a believer in feeling, but I am cautious about those feelings that do not rest down upon the solid foundations of good sense. There are those

who never do anything until they feel like it. These are not the successful people of the earth.

Another thing. It is no proof that you are not doing good because you cannot feel that you are doing good. The light house keeper trimming his lamp by day and keeping it burning by night has no feeling of success. Nobody ever comes to tell him that they have been saved from wreck through his fidelity. Ships that pass in the night do not stop at the nearest port and send him flowers or a handsome note of recognition. But he keeps on making the light shine in storm and tempest; in starlight and in darkness, not a night fails because his service is not based upon feeling, but upon duty.

You, my friend, if you keep your light trimmed and burning, making it to shine forth clear and fleckless into the troubled sea where so many are liable to be wrecked, need not worry about your feelings or your knowledge whether you are doing any good or not; just shine on—shine on with flawless honesty, with genuine charity, with prompt performance of duty, and God will take care that your light will not shine in vain.

The deep emotions of life are the ripe, full experiences of self-denying service. They are the fruits of obedience, the rich measure of reward for service well performed. Do not wait for them, do not delay obedience because they have not come. Go and do the duty that is at hand, perform the plain every-day task, place yourself in full union with Christ and your neighbor, and the patient continuance in well-doing will bring all the emotions and feelings that the heart is able to sustain.

THE POST OF DUTY

There is no better place from which to see heaven than a carpenter's bench, or a mason's wall, or a merchant's counter, if the heart be right. Elisha was plowing in the field when the prophetic mantle fell upon him. Matthew was engaged in custom-house duties when he was commanded to "follow." James and John were busily engaged in mending their nets when called to become fishers of men. Had they been dozing in the sun, Christ would not have brought their indolence into the apostleship. Gideon was at work with a flail on a threshing floor when he saw the angel. It was when Saul was with fatigue hunting his father's asses that he got the crown of Israel. There is no post like the post of duty.—*Sel.*

The Master Workman has given us a delicate marvelous tool. A good workman keeps his tools always in readiness. We are careful enough, perhaps, to keep our sharp tool from doing any hurt, but is it ready to use when the golden moment comes?

Understand the structure and chronology of the Bible. It is not essential to salvation to know all the books of the Bible in order, or the date and length of each king's reign, but it is helpful to a quick and intelligent handling of the word of truth.